

cellence in education. The Educational Excellence Partnership, including all-star athletes, businesses, Governors, and teachers, are pitching in to help our children aim high. The young people here behind me from the Boys and Girls Clubs of America embody the kind of future we're trying to build for them.

I want to thank all of you out there who have worked hard to set high standards, not only for your own children but for the other children in your community. I want to thank Cal and Kelly Ripken for the outstanding contribution they are making to literacy here in Baltimore. And I want to urge all of you to rededicate yourselves to the idea that every one of our children can learn, and we will not get into the 21st century with the future we want for them until we expect every one of them to learn and we give them the ability, the tools, and the support they need to learn.

We are very fortunate that outstanding major league baseball players, along with business leaders like Norm Augustine, have supported this public service campaign for educational excellence. I want you to watch these ads now, and I hope you will heed them. I hope you will support my call for national standards of excellence in reading and math and go back home and think about what you can do to make sure that every one of our children is as devoted to excellence in education as the baseball players we'll enjoy watching today from the Phillies and the Orioles are to excellence in their sport.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE. The President spoke at 3:01 p.m. at home plate at Oriole Park at Camden Yards. In his remarks, he referred to Bud Selig, acting commissioner of baseball; Peter Angelos, owner, Baltimore Orioles; Jim Hunter, WBAL Radio sportscaster; and Cal Ripken, Orioles third baseman. Following the President's remarks, those in attendance viewed the public service announcements on educational excellence, featuring prominent baseball players.

Message on the Observance of Independence Day, 1997

July 2, 1997

I am pleased to join my fellow Americans across the nation and around the world in celebrating Independence Day.

Looking back across two centuries, we still marvel at the courage and vision of our nation's founders. With clear eyes and staunch hearts, they fashioned a new form of government for our new country, a government that honors human dignity and protects individual rights. They devised a democracy strong enough to endure through the ages, yet flexible enough to meet new challenges and achieve new dreams. And in doing so, they made America a beacon of hope for generations of people around the world who cherish liberty and justice.

We have much to celebrate on this Independence Day. The journey our nation began more than 220 years ago has brought us to a time of peace and prosperity, a time of unprecedented opportunity to realize the full potential of all our citizens. As heirs to the freedom and equality bequeathed to us in the Declaration of Independence, it is now our responsibility—and our privilege—to build on that legacy and to ensure that America's promise holds true for all our people.

As we join with family and friends to commemorate another Fourth of July, let us resolve to make America a land where prejudice and discrimination have no place; to recognize that the values and ideals we share are more powerful and enduring than any force that would divide us; and to enter the twenty-first century as the "more perfect Union" first envisioned by our founders two centuries ago.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a wonderful Fourth of July celebration.

Bill Clinton

Statement on the Death of Jimmy Stewart

July 2, 1997

America lost a national treasure today. Jimmy Stewart was a great actor, a gentleman, and a patriot. We will always remember his rich career of great performances that spanned several decades and entertained generations of Americans.

Like all Americans, Hillary and I will miss him greatly, but his works live on, and for that we can all be grateful.

Interview With European Television Journalists

July 3, 1997

NATO Expansion

Q. Mr. President, thank you for having us and granting this interview with this group of European television stations. The Summit of Madrid marks the first expansion of the NATO to the Eastern European countries. Mr. President, it is perceived by the public opinion in Europe that the United States limits this expansion. It is perhaps a misperception from Europe?

The President. First of all, let me say that the expansion itself is historic, and we should not minimize it. Of course, Spain was the last new member of NATO, and that was an historic thing as well. But to expand NATO in a way that enables us to move closer to our goal of a united, democratic Europe for the first time in history is very important.

I don't want to limit NATO expansion; I want to leave the door open to all democracies that would like to be a part of it. But keep in mind, NATO is not simply a political alliance. It is primarily a military alliance, and we've done a lot of work to try to adapt NATO to the security challenges of the 21st century, to the Bosnias, if you will, rather than to the cold war.

So it seems to us, after having consulted with all of our allies and after having looked at the capacity of those that would like to become members, that the three members from Central Europe, Poland and Hungary and the Czech Republic, are clearly ready to assume the responsibilities of NATO

membership and ready to integrate militarily with NATO. That does not mean that the door should not remain wide open to others and that we shouldn't make every effort over the next couple of years to do what it takes to help others qualify for NATO membership.

I don't want to exclude anyone, but I think it quite important on principle that we not admit anyone until we're absolutely sure that their democracy is stable and that they are militarily capable. And this is just a difference of opinion. Some of the NATO members agree with us; some would prefer four; some would prefer five.

Q. But, Mr. President, does that mean that when you go to Madrid, in effect your mind is made up, and those who disagree in the alliance will have to join your view?

The President. NATO has always made decisions by consensus. For example, suppose we were for five and the British were for three—alone. In order to achieve a consensus, since that's the only way we can proceed, three would still prevail. In other words, it's not because it's America; it's because we have to reach a consensus.

But we have spent a lot of time with this. I've personally visited with President Chirac about it. I've personally talked with Chancellor Kohl about it. I've personally talked with President Aznar and with Tony Blair about it and many other European leaders. I had a long talk with Prime Minister Prodi about it. Then Madeleine Albright went to Sintra in Portugal and talked to all of the people about it before we announced a public position, and I have spent a long time with our military leaders talking about it. And others had announced their position before ours, so I don't foresee any circumstances under which I would change my position that today we ought to have three.

But keep in mind, my position also is—and some of the members don't agree with this—that we should leave the door open, that we should have a review, we should take another look at it in 1999, and even at 1999 we should keep the door open. That is, I see NATO as a way of continuing the process of European integration, which I have supported. I have supported the European Union; I have supported the independent se-